

Greetings members of Joint Committee:

My name is Jamie Batson. I am coming to you as both a constituent and as a soon-to-be small business co-owner. Because of proper communication, and boundaries, set by my cigarette-smoking parents, I did not start smoking until I was 18 years-old *and* no longer living under their roof. That having been said, I did start smoking at age 18, and continued a two-pack/day habit for 15 years.

When I discovered electronic cigarettes four years ago, it was nothing short of life-changing. For me, and countless others, pills did not work, patches and gums did not work. As someone coming to you with a degree in psychology, I know why. Traditional harm reduction methods simply do not address the behavioral aspects of smoking. Nicotine delivery is only half of the equation. In order to be successful, the entire habit must be addressed. Electronic cigarettes, providing vapor that mimics the smoking habit, nicotine – while avoiding the 7,000-plus chemicals in a traditional cigarette, satisfies the psychological habit that other harm reduction methods simply cannot. I went from smoking two packs/day to *not smoking traditional cigarettes, overnight*. After 15 years of addiction, I threw away an unopened pack of cigarettes.

I must stress the vital aspect of flavoring in e-liquid. Most of the time, the transition begins with tobacco or menthol flavors. As such, the senses are met with that to which they are accustomed, as regarding physical movement, the appearance of vapor, *and taste*. This immersive experience is key. As the taste buds repair, non-tobacco flavors like fruits and desserts provide the ability to move even farther from the risk of ever picking up a traditional cigarette again. They reinforce: I am no longer a smoker. Thusly, this movement is not about smoking. This is about technology. New technology, by definition, does not fit neatly into old paradigms. And, most importantly, vapers are not smokers.

A year and a half ago, I was laid off from my position as an ABA therapist. I was on unemployment. The state was picking up the tab for my rent, electricity, and cell phone. As a direct result of my transition to vaping, I was able to find employment in one of our local brick and mortars. Rather than sitting, young and healthy, at home, I went to work six days per week. At this time, I am poised to open my own brick-and-mortar in Monroe. These proposed bills do not simply threaten my right to vape before walking into the mall. They do not just threaten that my electronic cigarette supplies, and their profits, will now come from out of state. They directly, and eminently, threaten my personal livelihood. As co-owner of Coilhouse, our Monroe location is the simple beginning of larger plans. Our plans include opening additional locations, employing local residents. Personally, they also include buying a home and raising a family. The passage of the proposed bills assures me no means by which to support myself, and so, no home and no raising of a family.

If these bills are passed, I along with my fellow shop owners & their employees, do not just become smokers once again, we all effectively become wards of the state.

Thank you for your time and attention.